

**UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL  
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ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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**T = THERESA  
B = BELL  
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B: I want, I wanted to ask about health and, I'm particularly interested in traditional beliefs and practices. Not just home treatment, but treatment by various specialists [unclear] and all that. Interfaces with ah, western establishment [unclear]

T: Well, here at the M.A.A. we don't see too much of that. But I can tell you some of the, well just this morning one staff person who came in late and he had called. Was to take his Grandmother to the Monk. And just before I came in he had arrived. And apparently she was having great difficulty breathing. But she has now been admitted to the hospital. And ah, the comment was made, "well the Monk didn't help." And, you know, my feeling is, if the Monk makes her feel at ease to enter the western hospital he has helped. Ah, I know with some mental health cases ah, the ah, Solomon Mental Health Center and ah, the Venerable Sao Khon have worked together on cases. Ah, there seems to be no conflict. Now there might be some issues where there might be a conflict, but those that I am aware of ah, there was no conflict there was a joining together. We do see some of our ah, students come in and other clients come in ah, where there's evidence that, you know, cupping had taken place, or coining. Right. And ah, we have a day care center it's ah, has all American Children, Hispanic Children, Cambodian Children, um and ah, we have a Cambodian Aide, who is a mother, two kids. And ah, one little boy ah, got sick, and she pulled out the Tiger Balm. And this was going to take care of him. Ah, the then we have a high schooler who comes in after school to sweep the floors and wash the floors and ah, he came in and suddenly felt very, very sick. And out came the Tiger Balm again before any body could do anything. But, you know, the child had some kind of, either he ate something that brought this suddenly on. Or because he was vomiting and so on. Ah,

B: The Tiger Balm, what did he do? Did he rub it on himself or?

T: On his abdomen. Because he was feeling sick, yeah. Yeah. Now I had you know, if you want to use it go, I don't care. You know. But ah, just ah, mid-November I, my husband and I went on vacation to visit my older son and his wife in Oakland, California ah, and I had been bothered with a stiff neck and a soreness and I still have it. And my daughter-in-law whips out the Tiger Balm. [laughter] I was so, I said wait till I get back and tell my staff, you know. But I used it and it seems to anesthetize the surface a little bit for a short time. And it didn't cure anything. But, it relieved the pain so that I could enjoy myself you know. Or mostly so I could sleep at night. Ah, but ah, so now I have my own little package of Tiger Balm in my purse. I would imagine it would be great because it's like

B: The Tiger Balm was bought in the stores here?

T: Yeah, Yeah.

B: And some other things from Chinese Medicine you have to go to Boston.

T: Yeah, and I think some of the Vietnamese Doctors that we have, have medications that they prepare. But, I've never really

B: You mean medical doctors?

T: Medical doctors, yeah.

B: Who also use

T: Use some, yeah, I think the original

B: Do, you know, who are some of the doctors?

T: Well, Dr. Nguyen was the first one who was here. And I think he has some preparations that he puts together. Um, Dr. Tran ah,

B: Where is he? Is he down on

T: He's on Dummer Street. Again, not far from Joe's, right, right next to ah, the Demoulas Store, right. Um, now he used to be on Merrimack Street but he moved into quarters there. I think they were larger. And again very close, one block over is where Dr. Tran has his office. And as a matter of fact you can cut through the Demoulas parking lot through this little alley way and you're on Worthen Street. And that's where Dr. Tran is. Now the new Dr., when Dr. Tran first came to Lowell to take a look. I think he came from Hartford. At least he came from Connecticut. And he said my ah, patients are all moving to Lowell so I've come to take a look. And he followed his patients. Ah, and ah, he came to the M.A.A. and said I know that it's a large Cambodian Community. I'd like you to help me ah, to recruit a, an office worker nurse, who speaks the language. So that I can communicate more effectively with the patients. It showed he was a very wise business man as well as being a doctor. And ah, ah, when Dr. Do came he also came to the office. And now we have a Vietnamese Dentist, graduated from Tufts.

And so her credentials are American. Um, we've been hoping and we're willing to do what we can ah, with the hospitals. We've talked to the hospitals. Ah, to try to allow the Vietnamese doctors to have access to the services. Ah, I think, you know, when you think of a patient doctor relationship and why the patient goes to the Vietnamese doctor in the first place. They feel more comfortable. It's a piece of home. But if the illness is serious enough that the patient must be hospitalized. They have to be turned over to a stranger. I don't, I don't think that's right.

B: They don't understand the customs. It's touching people.

T: That's right.

B: In the wrong spot or,

T: Yeah.

B: Something a western doctor takes for granted as a normal procedure like would really put off,

T: Well, even if you put the cultural issues aside. I mean I know that I would feel pretty awful if a doctor were taking care of me and knew my history and so on. And suddenly it's very serious, you have to go to the hospital and it's a stranger. Someone I've never seen or met. So you have that trauma piled that anyone would feel. And on top of that the cultural things. Ah, we have had many calls from the hospital ah, describing, asking us to describe the, a procedure that's going to take place. Because the hospitals have been dragging their heels hiring staff. They insist that the same qualifications have to be there. They make no allowances that language is important. And so ah, it, it really makes it very difficult for the patients. Ah, we had two young women that came in I believe in the summer of 86. One had been a mid-wife in Cambodia. Her English was quite limited. Um, another one had worked in a nursing home in Seattle Washington. And they came East together. And the one who'd worked in a nursing home. Sure she, everyone has limited English. But she could communicate quite well in English. And we thought, Oh Boy! We've got a qualified, she had a certificate from a place in Washington State. And ah, the hospital would just be grabbing her up. No! We had to go through this long big procedure and they weren't interested.

B: [unclear]. Hospitals have traditionally not really been, [phone rings in background]

T: Right.

B: [unclear] no matter what culture, anyway, certified or not.

T: But the other one was a certified nurses-aide in the United States and still they, they wouldn't make allowances.

B: Is there, is there much home birth?

T: Not that I'm aware of. There's a prenatal clinic at Lowell General Hospital. The hospital that's furthest away. Ah, so it makes it very difficult. For a long time Lowell General did not

have an interpreter in the clinic. I mean they've just hired somebody not too long ago. And ah, the International Institute in Lowell has an interpreter but, it's a man. Here this man is taking these women and having to interpret things. Now does he give an accurate picture? One, because he doesn't want to say certain words and things. And two, can he give an accurate picture because it's his client, his patient describing it to him? Um, my cultural teacher here and I went to Middlesex Community College to talk to the teachers in the health professions unit. To try to give them some culture. And when it came to birth, and family planning and that sort of thing my, my staff person refused to talk about certain things. There are certain words he just wouldn't use. And so as he you know, I said to him, O.K., I will do some of this talking and if I make a mistake just you know, just nod your head no. And, you know, his face was red. His head was down cast and it was O.K., if I was saying this thing. But he couldn't say it. So, [laugh] now there are others where there's no problem. Ah, one of our recent graduates from our, our E.S.L. classes. We have set up in a part time job with the agency across the hall which is health works and they have a family planning. And they have been wanting to hire a Cambodian lady because they know that they need to service the community. And ah, Shavun um, was game. She had been a nurse in Cambodia. She had given I.V.'s course we, she never talked about family planning so she's having a learning experience. And the director said they want to train her so they can get her certified para-professional. Ah, which pleases me very much! Ah, but the line supervisor, the nurse practitioner and the other technicians that she's working with have never worked or talked to a Cambodian before. And so she drops in after work every day and she was saying, you know, "I have trouble understanding them. They have trouble understanding me." And ah we said, "hang in there." Then the nurse practitioner and the ah, um, supervisor came in. The medical technician came in. And they said, "we don't know if she doesn't understand English. Can't she come back to school here?" We said, "no." She's reached her maximum with us. The next step would be pre-G.E.D. preparation and getting her G.E.D. So they said, "well, we have to do something. So we don't even know if she understands the concept of family planning. And of course we have to be careful. Malpractice and so on." And I can see their point. So I said, "look we have some of the materials on different methods for family planning written in the native language. Now why don't we give these to you. You can give them to her. Tell her how. And ask her to tell you back in English what she's reading as a learning experience." Well, she happened to see her bosses talking to me. That afternoon she called up. And it's always more difficult to communicate over the telephone. Because you don't have body language at hand. Ah, but Shavun had called and said, "what we're they talking about?" I mean she's a smart lady. So I said, um, went through the thing, and I said, "Shavun, it's not your problem. It's an American problem. Their ear has to get accustomed to your voice. The same way that a parent learns to know what a two year old is saying. That neighbor down the street can't understand but the parent knows. I know what people are saying. Their ear has to learn. So that they will know." And, you know, if their talking too fast. ask them to be, speak more slowly. And we pretty much counseled the, her line supervisor that way too. Um, now there is a gentlemen who was studying to be a doctor in, in Cambodia when the war came. And he is an outreach worker for public health. But he continues to read medical books. He's a terrific guy. So I told both Shavun and her supervisors that if there was a question of her ability to know the medical content he would speak with her. And he wouldn't tell them she's incapable of learning or, she certainly knows what she's talking about but she can't verbalize it back to you. But he certainly would tell me. Since we've known each other for a long time. And after she and I had this long conversation on the phone. I thought there's nothing wrong with this lady's

comprehension. We're not even in person. We're doing it on the phone and she understood every single nuance that was being put over. And they really don't have anything to worry about. If they only will be patient.

B: Sort of sounds like there's some effort made on health medical establishment to train

T: Well, very small.

B: What about the other, what about the other side of the establishment attempting to find out about Cambodian customs so that they can understand better how to treat them?

T: Well, the Merrimack Valley Area Health Association ah, has, had been asking and now this same young man who ah, Nan Hul, who was studying to be a doctor is on their board. And he can give feed back from the community. To the Merrimack Valley Health Association. Um, we need um, Sally Penreby is on the Department of Mental Health at the State level. And she's Cambodian married to a American. And she's been doing a lot of work trying to break through and get ah, especially for our area here, a special mental health unit. Southeast Asian Mental Health Unit. And you know, from the time that the planing money came, it's going to be three years. But we hope that's going to be a reality. That it will eventually be funded. Um, I think when you have something like that you'll have more of an interchange. Um, public health tries to hold cultural sessions ah, for American service providers. And they tap into, they have a network. Sally's one of the people who frequently is a speaker. Ah, people from Brighton Marine Hospital come and speak on their Southeast Asian Unit and bring some of the culture. Um, the Department of Social Services ah, last year had a well, it was only an afternoon ah, workshop for local agencies, the Girls Club, the Boys Club, the Y, the Library, the Office of Employment and Training they were all invited to come. And they had a group of panelists. And someone started with the history of Cambodia. Going back to before Angkor, Angorwat. And then someone else talked about you know, the problems of the mew arrivals. And then the problems someone else talked about. Ah, the problems that come up after the refugees have been here awhile. They have learned to to survive. They now have food. They have housing and they have ah, heat. Um, now they're thinking back. Some of the mental health problems that are surfacing, you know, my relative that's still back there. Ah, I'm sure some of it is similar to ah, the, the what is called the survivors guilt. In hotel fires, things of that type. Ah, and some of it is, the children are becoming American, Americanized and I'm not. What's going to happen to our family unit? So..

B: The children are um, I guess are the group [unclear]. I tried to corner four kids in the basement of the Temple.

T: How old?

B: Teenagers.

T: Ah, ha.

B: And they were in a fun kind of way, they were poking fun at what was going on upstairs.

You know.

T: Yeah.

B: You know, they were going [making chanting sounds] trying to be cool and stuff. So I wanted to sit down and talk to them. They didn't, they were very reluctant to do that. But I think it's, to be a balance, I really should talk to

T: Yes, and I think

B: Do you have any suggestions about where..

T: Well, I was going to suggest that you might want to talk to Hang Boutcher. Hang is the

B: Is he the Temple

T: He's at the Temple, yeah.

B: He's the president of [unclear] or the treasurer or something.

T: Treasurer, right. Um, now the way I understand Hangs story is that when his family came to the United States he was left behind with the Monks. To complete some studies. And I don't know if it was one of those sacred time periods that you can't leave the Temple until, so many days, or so many weeks. Ah, because he stayed behind too long. And he's ah, he was ah, one of our legal aides in the past and ah, ah, vocational E.S.L. teacher. But he finally, he and his wife worked, and he had the two jobs. Ah, they bought a house. And then her parents came in. And then other members of the extended family. And I think everyone, you know, I don't know this for a fact. But, I think everyone chipping in to pay the rent. He could give up working two jobs. And he could enjoy his children. Ah, and I was, we were sorry to lose as a staff person. But I was happy that he was going to have more time with his kids. Ah, Hang dragged his heels about enrolling his daughter in kindergarten. Because he wanted to push back that tide of, she was going to become like American kids. Um, we finally told him, you know, now that the child is a certain age it's against the law to keep her home. You have send her to school. And if you postpone this you're only going to be hurting her. Because you're just pushing back time. You're not resolving. You're going to resolve the questions when she goes to school, and when she comes home, and how the family deals with that. That so, don't delay, do it now. And um, I think that he would be able to tell you something about the young people. And I think he could direct you to some young teenagers who probably are not rebelling, but are evolving. Their American culture combined with their ancestral customs.

B: The whole process is very

T: Yeah, and I, I think you will find that there are different teenagers. There are the rebellious kind who, all teenagers are, right? They're cutting the apron strings. And they're doing it, I'm going to be cool and I'm going to wear these cloths and so an. Which upsets their families tremendously. And there are those who are doing it not so dramatically but are evolving and

blending. And, and I think you really should talk to both groups.

B: [unclear]

T: Yeah, and I could ask ah, ah, this poor girl, I always, I always go to her, because her family to me is, is a very special family. And they're a number of children down to ah, I think the youngest one is second or third grade. And ah, the oldest ah, daughter is married, and the oldest son is married. And then comes this girl.

B: [unclear]

T: Yeah, you have the whole range, yeah. And as a matter of fact, it's even broader ranged because her father was married before. And I don't know if he became widowed back, well he must have, back in Cambodia. But he, she has half brothers who are like forty years old. And ah, her father I think understands a little bit of English. He's legally blind. Ah, he looks like you know, a little old man. And yet there's a tremendous amount of wisdom in that person, tremendous. And there are times when if, if I have a question about, you know, we were thinking of having a family planning class here. And the question came up, do we teach the men separate from the women? Do we put them both in the same room, as long as they're husband and wife? Ah, you could talk to a husband and wife together maybe on this. But, how is the husband going to feel about the other lady who's sitting over there, you know? We ended up we never had the class. Um, ah, but I told this, this girl. I said, "Rung, would you do me a favor and ask your father, culturally how should we deal with this." And the answer came back, you can't put the men and women in the same room if you're in Cambodia. But maybe in America it should be tried. Now this guys like seventy years old.

B: Quite an amazing thing.

T: Yeah, super. And ah, but I think, you know, if I could get her to agree. Ah, she is now a student at ah, she's in her second year, at Middlesex Community College. And ah, she's studying Health Professions.

B: [unclear]

T: Ah, I'd like to go back to Nan Hul who is not related to Narong Hul, but who is studying to be a doctor. And ah, Samoth the lady who's being trained to be a para-professional in family planning. And I said to her, "would there be a problem if Neah to you about some of these things?" That sometimes men and women who are not related, you know, not husband and wife don't talk to each other. And she said, "no, there wouldn't be a problem because I am a professional medically. And he is a professional medically. And you set culture aside when two professionals speak." And I was very impressed. I was very impressed. Ah,

B: I had read ah, something about the state of Washington on customs [unclear]

T: Yeah, I think we have a copy here.

B: You have no citations, or no references, so I have no idea where the information came from. But if I, if there was a, [unclear] if I read through that, I could give you an idea [unclear] there's a big difference in it comes to sexually related matters [unclear]

T: Well, I think to from what I've found with ah, ah, talking with different board members, staff members, friends, ah, depends on what your station in life was before the war came. If you were a city dweller you basically did som, you know, you survived. Ah, the war. But you were accustomed to going to business, being a teacher, ah, a white collar worked. That, you may look at some of these customs as yes, these are things, you know, we all hang our stockings by a chimney kind of thing. But the real belief of something taking place um, very different from the people who say came from small villages in the mountains. And I think it's the same kind of difference that you would find ah, seeing some farm people in the mountains in Tennessee, and seeing someone whose brought up in Manhattan. It really is, you know. Ah, and that's why I, I try to convince other Americans to see it that way.

B: To see the differences

T: That's right, our, our country you know, we have differences. And ah a New Englander and a Texan. We're all Americans but we have differences and we like to do things in a different way. And sometimes regionally you, you have to do it because you're accommodating yourself to the weather and the conditions of your region. And it's the same thing for people from another country. But too many Americans, you know, if you're an Italian you're an Italian.

B: Easy way to deal with people.

T: That's right. That's right.

B: There must be a variety here with different backgrounds. What about some of the arts and crafts and performance, are they represented?

T: Well

B: I know there was a study by the Refugee Arts Group. They did have a survey.

T: Well, I think that many of ah, our families ah, if they've gone off to the work place it's that's consuming their time. And I was talking with ah, a gentlemen who had worked in the camps and who had helped develop the voca, some of the vocational hands on training programs in the camps. And we, I incorporated that curriculum into our ah, program here. To give some basic hands on skills training.

B: What do they do? Woodworking or

T: Well, anything, use a hammer, use a saw. Ah, electro mechanically assembly. Ah, the divider in the office was built by students. Learning to measure. I mean they don't know about inches, they have the metric system. So, you know, you're starting from ground zero. And measure and cut, some plumbing, ah, in-taking inventory, things of that type. That would be



general to anything. And even if you get a job that you don't know how to repair, you don't need to know how to repair a light socket, or to make your own extension cord. Maybe those are some skills that will help you to be more self sufficient at home so you can spend the time doing other more productive things. Um, but this gentlemen was, they were recommending that in the camps they don't do the traditional arts. Because you're going to be earning five cents an hour if you're weaving baskets and things of that type. Yeah, yeah, And I think if you're the way, you know, I might knit in the evening, or I don't crochet I do some embroidery ah, to pass the time, or for enjoyment, right, ah

## SIDE 2

B: So anyway, I've been [few words unclear]. And we've documented some of their ceremonies. I guess the most recent was Saturday and Sunday. [Unclear] was reading stories about the thirteen lives of Buddha. We documented a wedding. I guess [name unclear].

T: Oh, Sopeep's wedding, okay.

B: What's his last name?

D: I thought it was [unclear].

T: Khuth.

B: It's K. Okay. Okay.

T: Yeah, K-H-U-T-H.

B: K-H-U-T-H.

T: Right.

B: So in general I've talked to Larry Flynn of course. And also a Narong, Hul (T: Narong Hul) at the store.

T: Yeah, good.

B: He was an interesting man to talk to.

T: Yeah. Narong is, was one of the ah, original founders.

B: Yeah, and then I talked to Narin Sao.

T: Yeah, another one. Did you talk to Michael Ben Ho?

B: Ah, no. I forgot his name. Ah, you think he's someone I should talk to?

T: Yeah, very different personality and ah, um, his ah, he's like a mover. (B: comment unclear) All right. He, he, he's exceedingly bright. Um, very interested in seeing the community move forward. Um, more of a chance taker in certain areas than some of the others. Of course he'll, he'll take the chance by you know, asking someone else to take the step forward, but he has the vision.

B: How long have you been with the Cambodian end?

T: Well, I started officially working in, I started officially working ah, February 1, 1985. Um, and been here ever since. Ah, the ah, I was interviewed for the job in November of '84. And that was like no other interview you'd ever want to have. Ah, there were four young men and there were four elders. And they all had, the young men pretty much asked the questions and then ah, translated what I said to the elders. And it was kind of intimidating. Um, and ah, Michael Ben Ho and Son Lee Sok and Narong Hul and Narin Sao were the four young men. Um, and the elders, I've seen them, but you know, I don't remember their names. Because we haven't had that much contact with them. And ah, I had not worked with refugees before. Um, but I had um, worked with um, well I had worked with them indirectly um, through my job, ah, working for Senator Paul Tsongas, and doing the immigration work. And um, and I was in his office um, in '75, in the Congressional Office when Vietnam fell, and the interaction. And so, um, I had some background. But not very much on Cambodia.

B: Did that, has the job altered your original ideas about what you [unclear] or what the people were like? [Comment unclear]

T: No. I don't, I think it's um, I think it's um, expanded. You know, there's nothing that, that has changed, that what I envisioned um, um, things were like. Things that they went through and so on, because I was very active in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement. Um, so ah, but I've certainly learned a lot more about the culture. Ah, I've, you know, simple things from when they say ah, when you ask someone to do something, and they say "yes." That that doesn't necessarily mean yes. It may mean I don't want to go against your wishes. Ah, you have to ask more questions. I've found that because they tend to be private, they don't like you to ask questions, but there's no outward resentment. Um, so I've found that I always start by saying, "I know that you don't like me to ask a lot of questions, but in order to help you through the agencies in the United States, I need to do this." And ah, they seem to relax. Ah, very difficult to get the staff to follow suit on that. Um, someone will come in with a problem of ah, "my daughter disappeared." All right. And it seems to me that the, the, my Cambodian staff person will be talking to the client for twenty minutes. Then he comes and he says, "his daughter disappeared." And I say, "when?" "I don't know." You know. "Was she with a friend?" "I don't know." "Where was she going?" "I don't know." "Well, what have you been asking this father?" You know? [Chuckles] And so then we have to go through the whole thing. And ah, it's not because my staff person is not competent, it's cultural.

B: Yeah, now that you've mentioned it, thinking back on interviews I've had, I've asked a lot of questions.

T: Yeah. Well.

B: I knew yesterday, [phone rings - few words unclear] the bride's brother didn't want to be tape recorded, because he didn't think his answers would be good enough. That's interesting.

T: Well when you mention tape recording, also there seems to be ah, difficulty with um, if someone is going to take certain action that may be positive, or there might be a negativism to it, um, they don't want to be responsible. And so they have, the first time tape recorded my recommendations secretly, with a miniature tape recorder. So that the person that I was talking to could take it back and if anything went wrong it wasn't his fault, it was my fault, I said so. And when I found out at the end of the conversation that I had been recorded. I said, ah, "I don't ever want you to do that again. If you want to record my statements, just say so. I won't mind." Um, [laugh] yeah.

B: [Few words unclear-phone rings] That's ethical cannon #1 for our profession.

T: I don't know how to disengage this thing.

B: It's okay. [Unclear] record someone with knowledge in our field.

T: Well, um, it was a very sensitive issue. It had to do with um, the Temple. And um, when the Temple was purchased ah, lack of information, thorough information was given to the community, and to the leader who was dealing with ah, the banks and so on. And um, I, there was a confusion between whether or not there was, it, between code and between um, um, [pause] I can't think of the word right now. Um, but the right to have a Temple in the, in the space. Okay.

B: Oh, you mean with the city.

T: With the city.

B: And that's Chelmsford right?

T: Right.

T: And they were assured that(--)

D: With the zoning board?

T: Zoning, that's it. That, [someone is moving mike around] that as far zoning is concerned, yes they could have it. But, no one mentioned code. And so, (B: the building codes) so the building was purchased and a great big festival was going to take place, you know, here's the first time we gather in our meeting hall. And there were so many people that came from New York, from Providence, from Boston everywhere, that the streets couldn't hold the parked cars. So they were parking in peoples driveways and in various places, wherever they could squeeze a car, which

was, which created a, a turmoil. And the neighborhood was very upset. And I believe that the police were called. And that's when they found out they didn't have an occupancy permit, and the building was not up to code for the use. So what happened immediately was you know, they looked at the leader who had been instrumental in purchasing the building that he didn't do his job right. And I tried to explain that, you know, we had an American bank here that knew the purpose. And we had an attorney that represented them who knew the purpose. And they're the ones who failed. So, what we did was we got a new attorney [keeps coughing] I think I need to get something to drink. [Long pause on tape] So um, so when the building was, was purchased, um, code hadn't been mentioned. And now this was an issue. And they couldn't use it for what they wanted. Ah, we found a new attorney. We, my recommendation was um, let's find an attorney who's willing to do this at, you know, at a reduced rate especially, and who is, who represents a city. Who is the attorney for a town, or a city, because they would be familiar with the codes. And ah, let's, let's um, go from there. So I called a number of friends and acquaintances and ended up with three or four names. And then checked these names out with other people. I said, if you were choosing an attorney and these are the four names, which one would you choose for this kind of thing? And from totally different sources the same name kept up as number one. So we approached that attorney. And he decided that he would do that. And then he led us to an architect. And the architect then led us to a builder. And ah, that team could argue. I mean we could get past, if a question was it had to be done because that was the law, we knew that our team knew that. If it, if the question was, because of prejudice, no we want you to do this in addition, our team could argue this has never been required of a religious institution in the past. And so we really did have a good, a good group. But it was convincing the community to shell out another \$25,000. You know, and you had to go all the way to the point of saying well, you can sit on your hands and pay the mortgage and not use the building. You can loose the building. You can sell the building, or you can come up with the money and have what you want. And, so that's what was being recorded, my recommendation that they should do this. So from then on when I met with what I, for want of a better word, "The Temple Committee", the group of elders who were very concerned. I would immediately say, if you want to record what I'm saying. Please put the recorded right there. [laughs] So from then on it was very open. They finally stopped using it, as the building progressed and they could move in, you know.

B: How was the surrounding community reaction then over the (--)

T: Well, one of the things that the ah, I suggested to the board and they talked it out. And they did have a neighborhood celebration. And it was not for necessarily the whole Cambodian Community to come to, but, there were many Cambodians there. And they invited people in the neighborhood, um, some of the religious leaders from churches that were close by, and many people came. And many people made speeches, and said we welcome you. And that was very good. Um, I, I you know, when something different moves into a neighborhood, there are always questions. And this was a great idea, because they could, they could see now what it was all about. And, and if you know that something's different, but you know how it's different, you're not as frightened of it, and you don't complain as much.

B: Are there people in the community, Cambodian Community moving out toward the Temple [unclear]?

T: Well, um, Mr. Michael Ben Ho bought some property on the same street and had a brand new house built.

B: What, on up the road? Up the [unclear]?

T: Right on the same street. I have been on the street, but I haven't seen the house. But right on Quigley Ave.

D: Well, that brings up an important question and that's neighborhoodness. Ah, in terms of the Cambodian Community. So where have they settled? I know there's (--)

T: There are, there are maybe three large pockets in Lowell. They're not all in the same place and we know this by, by doing a mailing and sorting by Zip Codes. Okay. And the largest group is in the 01852 zip area, which is in the Acre.

B: 01852.

T: All right. And I'm not a native of Lowell so I don't know the, the terminology for the different sections. But ah, one of the other Zip Code Areas is across the Merrimack River. Um, off Bridge Street.

B: It would either be Belvidere or Paw, I mean Centralville or Pawtucketville.

T: Yeah, it would either be there. But, I don't know what it's called.

B: Yeah, if it's West of, it's Centralville, or it's Pawtucketville if it's right.

D: Well I, here's a little map.

B: Not that I know anything, but I have this map.

T: Okay. Okay. It would ah, it would be in this area. In the Pawtucketville Area.

B: What's the zip there? And since you know the zips I can [unclear].

T: I don't know.

B: Okay.

T: 52, I know. The others I don't know. And then in the Lower Highlands there's another group.

B: Okay.

T: In the Lower Highlands.

B: I just noticed from looking where markets are, Asian Markets and so on (T: Yeah, that there must be enough people around there to make it worthwhile to have a market in the neighborhood.

T: Right. Well, I was going to Narin Sao's house one day and ah, his wife was going to show me how to make the coconut jello with the seaweed, and the coconut milk, and so on. And I was short some of the supplies. So in the Lower Highlands area I suddenly saw a market that had symbols that I knew was Southeast Asian. And um, it turned out it was a Laotian Market. And I had no idea it was there. But um, uh, they certainly seemed prosperous. Um (--)

B: Ah, there must, I forget, I talked to Joe Antonuccio.

T: Right.

B: At ah, you know, that big Southeast Asian Market [unclear].

T: Right.

B: I think it's probably the first eating area.

T: Well!

B: It was around '82, early. I don't know if it's first or not.

T: Um, I'm not sure that Joe was there in '82, because there was a write up on him in '85. No, unless he was there for three years. The Phnom Penh Store, which is sort of across Cardinal O'Connell (B: Yeah, [unclear], all right, was um, much much smaller. And I think he opened up either at the same time, or just before Joe. But then Joe had the big market. And Phnom Penh was the little tiny you know, (B: Right) mom and pop kind of one room crowded um, but the community is large enough to support both stores, because Phnom Penh has expanded. And then Battam Bang opened up on Merrimack Street. And now we've got several more. Um, we've tried ah, to tell the community that it takes so many people to support a certain kind of store. We got a lot of information from the Small Business Administration. But I think that if you had a store in Connecticut, or New York, and you see that the stores here are doing well, you're going to open up. And eventually some of them will close, unless the population continues. Um, ah, we've also sort of encouraged them to ah, if you really want to have a market, don't open right next door to where it's already saturated. Ah, go to another section. Um, have it international. Appeal to the college students. Get a new clientele. You may get some of your (--)

B: Is that, is that hard, or easy for the people, the business people?

T: Well no one's done it yet. And we're talking about it the summer of '85. so.

B: I remember talking to Narong a couple of times about his store. He said in the beginning it was mostly non-Asian. And then it just flipped around, so that now most of his clientele, [few words unclear] clientele are Asians.

T: Are Asians.

B: And he prefers it that way. Because he feels he's fulfilling a need for them.

T: Right.

B: [Unclear] when he sees a need, he has a new element.

T: New element. Ah, one of the (--) It's interesting, because there's a young girl, I first met her, she was a senior at the Greater Lowell Vocational School. And she asked the ah, the M.A.A. to sponsor a Senior Prom. Um, the M.A.A. had done this um, the Summer of, well the Spring actually of '86, ah because no parent would allow their high school seniors to go to the graduating proms, the dances, you know. Again the cultural things. Young men, young women can't do that. Ah, and we sponsored one. And we had more adults than we had teenagers. And the Girls Club in Lowell allowed us to use their space. Their beautiful new gym, and then the kitchen, and everything downstairs for the food. And I think the parents realized that this was okay. And there were, you know, M.A.A. staff there. Larry Flynn and his wife helped out. Ah, so that the Spring of '87 when Kim Son Kao ah, asked us to do it again, I had one helper! We only had teenagers. We had the group of teenagers who, the committee who did an awful lot of the work, and what not, but only one other adult. And these, and the kids were allowed, Narong Hul's sister I believe was allowed to go to her prom. Ah, so, so it changed. And I think partly we, using the word prom it was something more special than a dance.

B: Is there, is there a lot of intergenerational conflict within the Cambodian Community?

T: Well, I think you know, in any community where you have the young people are becoming part of the, the culture here. And you know, if your friends are doing it, any teenager, my own teenager you know, "well all my friends are doing it, why can't I?" All right. And ah, so I think some of that is happening and they, and they, the kids want to be accepted. Um, and the parents can see that they're losing them. You know, um (--)

B: You mean in terms of the culture?

T: Of the culture. And there are some young people um, who realize that. And they say to the parents you know, yes we will, you know, they behave. They don't just say it. They behave in a manner that the parents ah, are accustomed to between generations. And those parents are allowing more freedom. You know some do. It's individual. Just like any other family kind of thing. But I wanted to go back to Kim Son and Narong saying he is happy that now his, he's serving his community. Kim Son entered ah, Middlesex Community College in September. (B: This is? Oh) This is, no no, this is the young girl that asked us to do the prom this year. And what she had studied at the ah, at the Vocational School was printing. And her father was very pleased with her and said, "you know, you're going to go learn something about business. And then we'll set up our own printing shop." And with the number of weddings we have a printing shop would do well. Ah, all kinds of bulletins, notices, ah, other non-profits who have a service that they want distributed. You know, if she bought the Cambodian type she'd have a lot of

business. Um, that's when she started college. Now, she came in two weeks ago. One semester is over. And she's taken a part time job as a parent-aide at the Y.W.C.A., working with members of the Cambodian Community who need that kind of a service. She's just I think ten hours a week. So it doesn't interfere with her school work. And she said, "I'm changing." And I said, "oh, why are you changing?" And she said, "if I go into business I help myself. If I change to the health professions I help my people." So even kids are getting this sense. So I said, "you mean you don't want to go into printing any more?" And she said, "I like printing, but it's kind of selfish." You know that's a nice thing to hear. Really nice. Not that all the kids are like that, but some of that is transferring down to the next generation.

B: What about things like language with the [unclear] thing, [unclear] are being born here. Are they bi, are they truly bilingual? Are they?

T: It depends on the families again. It really does. Ah, I know families and some of them are students in the English as a Second Language classes, who religiously watch Sesame Street with their children. They want their kids to enter a mainstream classroom in kindergarten. And there are others who don't do that at all. Again, some of our students. And I was speaking to The Rotary Club a couple of months ago. And the question came up. You know, you say you have students learning English. Do they practice at home? And I said, "No. Most of them don't. And I think it's not because they don't want to learn English. Ah, both my parents came from another country and I was born here. And we were forbidden to speak English in the home, because they wanted us to maintain our French. It's not because they were anti-English. They were pro-keeping the native language. Um, when I was about thirteen my father was going to go for his citizenship. Then we had to speak English because he needed to practice. [Chuckles] And I think, you know, when you think about it I think that most people from another culture, another country ah, go through that process. It's not that they don't want to become assimilated. I think they want to very much, but they want their children to have some of the culture. And I must say that among ah, my mother's brothers and sisters who all were, all came, the whole family came to this country when ah, my mom was nine. Ah, I'm the only child of like thirty odd cousins who can still read and write in French.

M: Now do you think the older Cambodians are afraid that will happen? Or do they believe they'll be able to keep the language and some of the, what they think are important customs alive?

B: Well, I've seen quite a few young people who are not, you know, the kindergarteners, um, but the older teenagers and young twenties. And I was very much surprised because the country, you know, there hasn't been a school for a long time for these kids. These, these young people were ten years old when the war came basically. Ah, that they can read and write in their native language. So parents are doing something. Ah, many of the, the, maybe, I guess the bulk of ah, the Cambodians here, um, were not very highly educated in the home country, because the Khmer Rouge saw to that. So we have ah, some who read and write, but we also have some who can't read and write. They lived in the villages. And those individuals can't teach their children, because they can't read and write themselves.

B: Is there any, are there any formal (--)



T: Well, I understand

B: [unclear] organizations and institutions?

T: Well at one time the M.A.A. ran Saturday morning classes for young people. And they ranged in age from five to sixteen. Um, one of the teachers who was a teacher in Cambodia, ah, felt after a year that parental interest wasn't there, and that's why the children started dropping out. And I think, you know, some of it is, [pause] there are other things to be done on a Saturday morning especially if you are a working family. That's when you go shopping, you know, go to the laundromat and things of that type. Ah, I, I really believe that come the future some of these youngsters who are born here, once they're at the college level they will want to learn if they don't know now.

B: Yeah, well that's, wait another generation.

T: That's right.

B: Their children. And by then it's often maybe not too late, but getting very late (T: right) to go back and find.

T: Well I found it very interesting when my own children ah, and my oldest one is the only one that I gave French lessons to when he was young. But it's kind of difficult because my husband's knowledge of French was limited. And my in-laws, no one spoke it. Um, but at least he had a little bit when he was you know, five, six, seven years old. When he entered high school, well he started languages in junior high, ah, he chose French out of the languages available. And I thought that seemed fairly normal. Ah, ten years later my daughter enters junior high and I'm trying to convince her that Spanish is going to be far more valuable. And, but she chose French. She eventually did take both languages. And ah, has continued with the Spanish in college, and is involved in Hispanic affairs in her job. Um, but young, youngest son who's a senior in high school didn't want to take any other language and I don't know why. [Chuckles]

B: You have no idea.

T: Nope, just French. And he, (B: just French) yeah, just French. Ah, and he ended up ah, when he had had well, he was a freshmen, finished his freshmen year in high school. He went on exchange program and lived with a French family for a month. And then his French really increased. And the following summer one of the boys from the family ah, came and spent the month with us, so ah.

B: I want to ask you about medicine too, and health.

T: Okay.

B: This things just about(--) These go fast. They're half hour tapes. [Unclear]

SIDE I ENDS  
SIDE II BEGINS

B: I wanted, I wanted to ask about the health [few words unclear]. I'm particularly interested in traditional beliefs and practices. No just home treatment, but treatment by various specialists and [few words unclear] And how that interfaces with uh, what's been established medical practices.

T: Well here at the, at the M.A.A. we don't see too much of that, but I can tell you some of the (-  
-) Well just this morning one staff person who came in late, and he had called, was to take his grandmother to the Monk. And just before I came in he had arrived. And apparently she was having great difficulty breathing. An um, but she has now been admitted to the hospital. And um, you know, the comment was made, "well the Monk didn't help." And you know, my feeling is if the Monk makes her feel at ease to enter the Western Hospital he has helped. I know in some mental health cases uh, the Solomon Mental Health Center, and Venerable Sao Kon have worked together on cases. Uh, there seems to be no conflict. You know, there might be some issues where there might be a conflict, but those that I am aware of, uh, there was no conflict. There was a joining together. Uh, we do see some of our students come in, and other clients come in, uh, where there's evidence that you know, "cupping" had taken place, (B: "coining") or "coining". Right. And uh, we have a day care center. It has all-american children, and Hispanic children, and Cambodian children. Uh, and we have a Cambodian aid who is a mother, two kids. And uh, one little boy got sick and she pulled out the "Tiger Balm", and this was going to take care of him. Uh, the, then we have a high schooler who comes in after school to sweep the floors, and wash the floors. And he came in and suddenly felt very very sick. And out came the "Tiger Balm" again before anybody could do anything. But you know, the child had some kind of, either he ate something that brought this suddenly on, or because he was vomiting and so on. Uh (-)

B: Tiger Balm. What did he, did he rub it on himself, or?

T: On his abdomen, because he was feeling sick, yeah. Yeah. Now I had you know, if you want to use it I don't care, you know? But just mid-November I, my husband and I went on vacation to visit my older son and his wife in Oakland, California. Uh, and I had been bothered with a stiff neck and a soreness, and I still have it. And my daughter-in-law whips out the Tiger Balm. [Laughs] I was so. I said, "wait till I get back and tell my staff!" You know. But I used it. And it seems to anesthetize the surface a little bit for a short time. And it didn't cure anything, but it relieved the pain so that I could enjoy myself, you know, or mostly so that I could sleep at night. Uh, but uh, so now I have my own little package of Tiger Balm in my purse. I would imagine it would be great, because it's like (-)

B: [Few words unclear] in the stores here?

T: Yeah, yeah.

B: Now some of the things from Chinese medicine you have to go to Boston.

T: Yeah, and I think some of the Vietnamese doctors that we have have medications that they prepare. But I've never really (--)

B: You mean medical doctors?

T: Medical doctors, yeah.

B: Yeah, who also use (--)

T: Use some. Yeah. I think the, the original (--)

B: Who else? Who are some of the doctors that (--)

T: Well Doctor Nyguen was the first one who was here. (B: Umhm) And I think he has some preparations that he puts together. Um, Dr. Tran, uh(--)

B: And where is he? Is he down (--)

T: He's on Dummer Street. Again, not far from Joe's. Right. Right next to uh, (B: he's on the other side) the DeMoulas Store. Right. Right. Um, now he used to be on Merrimack Street, but he moved into the quarters. I think they were larger. And again, very close, one block over is where Dr. Tran has his office. And as a matter of fact you can cut through the DeMoulas parking lot through this little alley way and you're on Worthen Street. And that's where Dr. Tran is. Now the new, when Dr. Tran first came to Lowell to take a look, I think he came from Hartford. At least he came from Connecticut. And he said my patients are all moving to Lowell, so I've come to take a look. And he followed his patients. Um, and uh, he came to the MAA and said, I know that's it's a large Cambodian Community, I'd like you to help me to recruit an office worker, nurse who speaks the language, so that I can communicate more affectively with the patients, which showed he was a very wise businessman, as well as being a Doctor. And uh, when Dr. Doe came he also came to the office. And now we have a Vietnamese dentist, graduated from Tufts. And so her credentials are American. Um, we've been hoping and we're willing to do what we can with the hospitals. We've talked to the hospitals, uh, to try to allow the Vietnamese doctors to have access to the services. Uh, I think, you know when you think of a patient/doctor relationship, and why the patient goes to the Vietnamese doctor in the first place, they feel more comfortable, it's a piece of home. But if the illness is serious enough that the patient must be hospitalized, they have to be turned over to a stranger. And I, I don't think that's right.

B: They don't understand the customs of just touching people.

T: That's right.

B: In the wrong spot. (T: Yeah) Something a Western doctor takes for granted as normal procedure might really put off (--)

T: Well even if you put the cultural issues aside, I mean I know that I would feel pretty awful if a doctor were taking care of me and knew my history, and so on, and suddenly it's very serious. You have to go to the hospital, and it's a stranger. Someone I've never seen or met. So you have that trauma piled up that any one would feel. And on top of that the cultural things. We have had many calls from the hospital describing, asking us to describe the, a procedure that's going to take, because the hospitals have been dragging their heels hiring staff. They insist that the same qualifications have to be there. They make no allowances that language is important. And so uh, it, it really makes it very difficult for the patients. Uh, we had two young women that came in I believe the summer of '86. One had been a midwife in Cambodia. Her English was quite limited. Uh, another one had worked in a nursing home in Seattle, Washington. And they came east together. And the one who had worked in the nursing home, sure she, everyone has limited English, but she could communicate quite well in English. And we thought, oh boy, we've got to qualify when she had a certificate from a place in Washington State. And uh, the hospital would just be grabbing her out. No, we had to go through this long big procedure, and they weren't interested.

B: Well the hospitals have traditionally not [few words unclear] no matter what culture anyway, (T: yeah) certified or not.

T: But the other one was a certified nurse's aid in the United States, and still they, they wouldn't make allowances.

B: Is there, is there much home birth in the community?

T: Not that I'm aware of.

B: [Unclear]

T: There's a prenatal clinic at Lowell General Hospital. The hospital, that's the furthest away. So it makes it very difficult. For a long time Lowell General did not have an interpreter in the prenatal clinic. I mean they've just hired somebody not too long ago. And uh, the International Institute in Lowell has uh, an interpreter, but it's a man. And here this man is taking these women and having to interpret things. Now does he give an accurate picture? One, because he doesn't want to say certain words and things. And two, can he give an accurate picture, because it's his client, the patient describing it to him. Um, my cultural teacher here, and I went to Middlesex Community College to talk to the teachers in the Health Professions Unit, to try to give them some culture. And when it came to birth, and family planning, and that sort of thing, my, my staff person refused to talk about certain things. There are certain words he just wouldn't use. And so as he, you know, I said to him, "okay. I will do some of this talking, and if I make a mistake just, you know, just nod your head no. And you know, his face was red, his head was downcast, and it was okay if I was saying this thing. But he couldn't say it. But he couldn't say it. (B: Yeah) So. Now there are others where there's no problem. Uh, one of our recent graduates from our, our ESO classes, we have set up in a part-time job with the agency across the hall, which is Health Works. And they have a family planning. And they have been wanting to hire a Cambodian Lady, because they know that they need to service the community. And uh, Sarong was [gain?]. She had been a nurse in Cambodia. She had given IV's. Of course we, she

never talked about Family Planning. So she's having a learning experience. And the Director said they want to train her so they can get her Certified Para Professional, which pleases me very much, but the Line Supervisor, the Nurse Practitioner and the other technicians that she's working with have never worked or talked to a Cambodian before. And so she drops in after work every day. And she was saying, you know, "I have trouble understanding them. They have trouble understanding me." And um, and we said, "hang in there." [coughs] Then the Nurse Practitioner and the uh, Supervisor came in, the Medical Technician came in. And they said, "we don't know if she doesn't understand English. Can't she come back to school here?" We said "no, she's reached her maximum with us." Uh, the next step would be pre GED preparation, and getting her GED. So they said, "well we have to do something." So we don't even know if she understand the concept of Family Planning. And of course we have to be careful, malpractice and so on. And I can see their point. So I said, "look. We have some materials on different methods for family planning written in the native language. Now why don't we give these to you, you can give them to her. Tell her how, and ask her to tell you back in English what she's reading as a learning experience." We she happened to see her bosses talking to me. That afternoon she called up. And it's always more difficult to communicate over the telephone, because you don't have body language at hand. But Sarong called and said, "what were they talking about?" I mean she's a smart lady. So I said, uh, went through the thing and I said, "Sarong, it's not your problem, it's an American problem. Their ear has to get accustomed to your voice, the same way that a parent learns to know what a two year old is saying, that the neighbor down the street can't understand. But the parent knows. I know what people are saying. Their ear has to learn so that they will know. And you know, if they're talking to fast, ask them to be more slow, speak more slowly." And we pretty much counseled the, her Line Supervisor that way too. Um, now there is a gentleman who was studying to be a doctor in Cambodia when the war came. And he is an outreach worker for Public Health, but he continues to read medical books. He's a terrific guy. So I, I told both Sarong and her supervisors that if there was a question of her ability to know the medical content, he would speak with her. And he wouldn't tell them she's incapable of learning, or she certainly knows what she's talking about, but she can't verbalize it back to you, but he certainly would tell me because we've known each other for a long time. And after she and I had this long conversation on the phone, I thought, there's nothing wrong with this lady's comprehension. We're not even in person. We're doing it on the phone and she understood every single nuance that was being put over. And uh, they really don't have anything to worry about. If they only would be patient.

B: So it sounds like there's some effort made on health medical establishment to train [unclear].

T: Well very small.

B: So what about the other, what about the other side of the establishment attempting to find out about Cambodian customs so that they can understand better how to treat them?

T: Well Merrimack Valley Area Health Association has, had been asking and now the same young man who uh, Nan Ho who was studying to be a doctor is on their board. And he can give feedback from the community to the Merrimack Valley Health Association. Um, we need um, Sally [Pinrebe?] is on the Department of Mental Health at the state level. And she is Cambodian married to an American. And she has been doing a lot of work trying to break through and get,

especially for our area here, a special mental health unit. Southeast Asian mental health unit. And you know, the, from the time that the planning money came, it's going to be three years, but we hope that's going to be a reality that it will eventually be funded. I think when you have something like that you'll have more of an interchange. Um, public health tries to hold cultural sessions for american service providers. And they tap into, they have a network. Sally is one of the people who frequently is the speaker. People from Brighton Marine Hospital come and speak on their Southeast asian unit and bring some of the culture. Um, the Department of Social Services last year had a, well it was only an afternoon workshop for local agencies. The Girls Club, the Boys Club, the Y, the Library, the Office of Employment and Training, they were all invited to come. And they had a group of panelist. And someone started with the history of Cambodia, going back to before, [few words unclear]. And then someone else talked about you know, the, the problems of the new arrival. And then the problem someone else talked about, uh, the problems that come up after the refugees have been here awhile. They have learned to survive. They now have food, they have housing and they have heat. Um, now they're thinking back, some of the mental health problems that are surfacing, you know, my relative that's still back there. Uh, I'm sure some of it is similar to um, the, what is called the survivor's guilt in hotel fires, things of that type. Uh, and some of it is my children are becoming americans, americanized and I'm not. What's going to happen to our family unit?

B: The children are, is the group that I haven't talked to. I tried to corner four kids in the basement of the temple.

T: How old?

B: Teenagers, and they were hm, you know, in some kind of way they were poking fun of what was going on upstairs [unclear]. (T: yeah) They were going [makes sounds], like trying to be cool and stuff. So I want to go sit down and talk to them. They didn't, you know, they were very reluctant to do that. But I think it's, it could be a balance. I really should talk to [unclear].

T: Yes. And I think [clears throat] (--)

B: Do you have any suggestions about where [unclear]?

T: Well I was going to suggest that you might want to talk to Heng Bunchia. Heng is the (--)

B: Is he at the temple?

T: He's at the temple, yeah.

B: He's the president, or treasurer, or something?

T: Treasurer, right.

B: Um, now the way I understand Heng's story, is that when his family came to the United States, he was left behind with the Monks to complete some studies. And I don't know if it was one of the sacred time periods that you can't leave the temple until so many days, or so many

weeks. Uh, because I don't think he stayed being too long. And he's uh, he's uh, he was uh, one of our bilingual aids in the past, and uh, vocational E.S.L. teacher. Um, but he finally, he and his wife worked and he had the two jobs. Uh, they bought a house. And then her parents came in and then other members of the extended family. And I think everyone, you know, I don't know this for a fact, but I think everyone chipping in to pay the rent, he could give up working two jobs, and he could enjoy his children, you know. Um, and I was, we were sorry to lose him as a staff person, but I was happy that he was going to have more time with his kids. Uh, Heng dragged his heels about enrolling his daughter in kindergarten, because he wanted to push back that tide of she was going to become like american kids. Okay. Um, we finally told him, you know, now that the child is a certain age, it's against the law to keep her home. You have to send her to school. And if you postpone this you're only going to be hurting her, because you're just pushing back time. You're not resolving. You're going to resolve the questions when she goes to school and she comes home, and how the family deals with that. That, so don't delay. Do it now. And um, I think that he would be able tell, he would be able to tell you something about the young people. And I think he could direct you to some young teenagers who probably are, are not rebelling, but are evolving their american culture combined with the ancestral customs.

B: Yeah, that whole process is very interesting.

T: Yeah. And I, I think you will find that there are different teenagers. There are the rebellious kind who, all teenagers are, right? They're cutting the apron strings. And they're doing it, I'm going to be cool, and I'm going to wear these clothes, and so on, which upsets their families tremendously. And there are those that are doing it not so dramatically, but are evolving in blending it. And, and I think you really should talk to both groups.

B: [Comment unclear]

T: And I could ask um, uh, this poor girl. I always, I always go to her, because her family to me is, is a very special family. And there are a number of children down to, I think the youngest one is second, or third grade. And uh, the oldest daughter is married, and the oldest son is married. And then comes this girl. Yeah, we have the whole range. Yeah. And as a matter of fact it's even broader range, because her father was married before. And I don't know if he became widowed back, well he must have, back in Cambodia. But she has half brothers who are like forty years old. And uh, her father I think understands a little bit of English. He's legally blind. Um, he looks like you know, a little old man, and yet there's a tremendous amount of wisdom in that person. Tremendous. And there are times when, if I have a questions about you know, we were thinking about having a family planning class here. The question came up, do we teach the men separate from the women. Do we put them both in the same room as long as they're, they're husband and wife. Uh, you could talk to a husband and wife together maybeon this, but how is the husband going to feel about the other lady who is sitting over there, you know? We ended up we never had the class. Um, uh, but I, I told this girl. I said, "Robin, would you do me a favor and ask your father culturally how should we deal with this?" And the answer came back, you can't put the men and women in the same room if you're in Cambodia, but maybe in America it should be tried. And this guy is like seventy years old.

B: [Comment unclear]

T: Yeah, super. But I think, you know, if I could get her to agree. Um, she is now a student at uh, she's in her second year at Middlesex Community College. And uh, she's studying Health Professions.

B: Well I would appreciate it.

T: Um, I'd like to go back Nan Ho who is not related to Narong Ho, but who was studying to be a doctor. And uh, and Sarong, the lady who is being trained to be a paraprofessional in Family Planning. And I said to her, would there be a problem if Nan talks to you about some of these things that sometimes men and women who are not related, you know, not husband and wife don't talk to each other about. And she said, no, there wouldn't be a problem, because I am a professional medically, and he is a professional medically. And you set culture aside when two professionals speak. And I was very impressed. I was very impressed. Um.

B: I had read something about from the State of Washington on the customs [rest of comment unclear].

T: Yeah, I think we have a copy here.

B: It had no, you know, no citations and no references, so I have no idea where the information came from. But it was, by reading through that I can get an idea that there's a big, big difference when it comes to sexual relating matters, and [few words unclear].

T: Well I think too, from what I found with um, um, talking with different Board members, staff members, friends, uh, depends on what your station in life was before the war came. If you were a city dweller, and basically did some, you know, you survived the war, but you were accustomed to going to business, being a teacher, um, a white collar worker, that you may look at some of these customs as yes, these are things, you know, we all hang our stockings by a chimney kind of thing. But the real belief of something taking place um, very different from the people who say came from small villages in the mountains. And I think it's the same kind of difference that you would find um, seeing some farm people in the mountains in Tennessee, and seeing someone who's been brought up in Manhattan. It really is, you know? Um, and that's why I, I, I try to convince other americans to see it that way.

B: To see [few words unclear] (T: That's right. Our country) It's always [unclear] to see [unclear] culture.

T: Our country, you know, we have differences. And uh, a New Englander, and a Texan. We're all americans, but we have differences and we like to do things in a different way. And sometimes you know, regionally you, you have to do it because you're accomodating yourself to the weather and the conditions of your region. And it's the same thing for people from another country. But too many americans, you know, if you're an Italian, you're an Italian. If you're [coughs, cannot transcribe]

B: Easy way of doing things.



T: That's right, that's right.

B: Well there must be a variety here [unclear]. What about some of the arts and crafts, performance [unclear]? Are they represented?

T: Well!

B: I know there was a study by the Refugee Arts Group. They did kind of a survey here.

T: Well I think that many of our families um, if they've gone off to the work place it's, that's consuming their time. And I was talking with a gentleman who had worked in the camps, and who had helped develop the, some of the vocational hands-on training programs in the camps. And we incorporated that curriculum into our program here to give some basic hands-on skills training.

B: What were they doing? Woodworking, or?

T: Well anything. Use a hammer, use a saw. Uh, (--)

B: [Comment unclear]

T: Uh, electrical mechanical assembly. Uh, the divider in the office was built by students. Learn to measure. I mean they don't know about inches. They have the Metric system. So you know, you're starting from ground zero. And measure and cut. Some plumbing. Um, taking inventory. Things of that type that, that would be general to anything. And even if you get a job that you know how to repair, you don't need to know how to repair a light socket, or to make your own extension cor

Janine

TAPE COMES TO END

T: I said, "don't tell me about borrowing." I said, "I don't want the tissue back when you're through with it. You are taking it." And they said, "no, no, when we take things in America we call it borrowing." [laugh]

B: That covers a lot of ground.

T: Yeah, yeah.

B: What are some of the

T: Well, when ah,

B: Things that are being practiced. And I mean every, you know, the art. I'm, I'm being inclusive when I say arts. I'm not taking, I'm including food,

T: Well, food is wonderful. [laugh]

B: Well, I've noticed some Burger King's being brought to [unclear] too. [laugh] A lot of [unclear]

T: Right, right and ah, ah, we had, we've had some staffers who you know, every once in a while we'd chip in and let's get a pizza. And everyone has a piece and ah, many Cambodians once they get a slice of pizza, their hooked. [laugh] You know, and this one guy, he loved to show each [unclear] to get a pizza today. But, he keeps saying, "I think my wife would like pizza." But he never would go to a Pizza Parlor and order a pizza and take it home. You know, I don't know why. His English was certainly good enough. But, I don't know what kept him from doing it. But he never did. He'd say, "well maybe you know, maybe at, someday actually go get a pizza for my wife to taste."

B: Maybe she'd like it too much or something.

T: [laugh] I don't know. I don't really think that was it. I think he just felt strange. This was, this was something very foreign. It's not like going into the market and taking a can of food off the shelf. You have to ask somebody for something and then they have to cook it for you.

B: Is there much experimentation with food and things? About going to the market and seeing things that are strange. Taking them home and trying out.

T: I don't know. I don't know, um, my guess would be that most of the cooking is traditional. You know, and there are enough markets where they can get the traditional food.

B: So other Cambodian ah, encounter with American food like fast foods

T: Well, that would be different.

B: Rather than going home and making something.

T: And cooking a hamburger. And putting it in a roll and put ketchup on it. I don't think they would do that.

B: Right.

T: But it's O.K

B: But, they will go to MacDonalds or Burger King, Kentucky Fried Chicken.

T: That's right. Um, I, now I know that like Larry Flynn's wife told me one day when she had some of these, these um, either older teenagers or early twenties, including the guy who got the permanent, all right because that was one of their "boys" in quotes. Um, that Kathy would make a great big pot of spaghetti sauce. And cook some spaghetti up. And they loved it. But no one would like take it back home. Ah, the only time I've been asked for, "how do you make that?" was when I brought in ah, ah some ch, some chew, well we call it Choochoo Train Fried Rice. It's ah, in Joyce Chens cookbook. And it's called that. Um, and it was a different kind of fried rice. Oh, I want my wife to make some like this. But see that's not too different.

B: It's a little closer.

T: Yeah. The only other, I brought in some ah, ah, well a very Chinese cookie recipe made with lard and then the batter is rolled out. And, and in little balls. Ah, and then you sort of glaze it with a beaten egg yoke and sprinkle sesame seeds on it. All right. And they are not very sweet um, and they liked those. Can my wife make some of those? You know, um, but now I had one sort of party at my house where members of the staff came. And I said all right now you're going to have, you know, you're going to have Indian Food and you're going to have Chinese Food. Those are my favorite kinds of things to cook anyway. And they liked everything. But no one said, "I'd like to make that at home. How do you do it?"

B: Have you been experimenting with Cambodian cooking?

T: Well, I can't get anybody to give me recipe. You know. Well, you just take some of this, and you buy a package of that, and I'm saying it's not going to come out right. You know, forget it. I'm for precise measurements. Ah, for the big Folk Festival last July, I ah, said that what I would do is I would make this [Cambodian Name] the coconut jello with the seaweed all right. So I asked someone how to make it. And they gave me this, well you take this can of coconut milk and you use about a 1½, maybe 2/3's. And then you get a package of the seaweed. And then you taste it [laugh]. And then you add sugar [laugh]. So I said, "can I please come to your house and watch you do it?" All right, so then I, you know, there were no measuring cups. Just a tea cup, and for the number of cups of water. It was a bowl. And I said, "well I'm not going to be able to duplicate this at home unless we have a standard measure." So I looked on, in the cupboard and found a bowl that I have an exact copy, all right. So I said, "please let's measure the water with this. And then I will know." So I wrote down what I was watching, and stirred the pot. So that my hand could get at least a feel of consistency we were talking about. And ah, went home and tried it out. And then brought the sample in and asked the students in our E.S.L. class if they would mind experimenting. And that here this was a test. It was my test. And I had to know if I had passed or failed. Because I wanted them to give an honest answer. And not just say, "oh, it's fine." You know, [laugh] I wanted criticism. And we got criticism. Not enough sugar, not enough salt, not enough eggs. You know, and ah, made some arrangements of the basic recipe. And then brought another batch in. And everyone agreed that was terrific. So, so I knew I finally had the right recipe. And made the pudding for the festival. And we sold out. Americans wanted to try a square and they liked it.

B: Really, that's the same as any folk recipe. Even your own grandmother followed, didn't tell you two tablespoons of this. It's a pinch of

T: True. True.

B: You know, shake it twice and

T: Well, ah, well even my mother

B: Because you learn from doing it. You don't learn by writing it down and reading it either.

T: Yeah, well I know when I used to ask my mother how she made her pie crust. And my father had fabricated out of a piece of sheet metal a scoop, a flour scoop. And depending on how full or how empty it was it was this or that. And so I never really did learn how to make a pie crust. And then I married my husband. And he started raving about his mom's pies. And that she made the most terrific pies. Needless to say I did not experiment with pie crust then. Until I guess we'd been married about six years and ah, it was a family Thanksgiving. And my mother-in-law was bringing the pies. And I, we went the day before because we were living out of town, out of state as a matter of fact. And I saw that she bought a package of mix at the super market that she was crumbling up in this bowl and adding water too. And I said, "well if that's the greatest pie crust in the world. I can compete with that." [laugh] So after, after seeing it and trying it I started making pies. But you're right you know, it's some of this and some of that.

B: I'd say their food tends to be more conservative than our culture. In terms of what people retain at home.

T: Too

B: Rather than die and all, coming here and adopting wholesale, the whole different food ways. Food sense to remain. They might give up dress and their language

T: Right.

B: Medical beliefs maybe, and things like that but, food seems to

T: Yeah, I think, I think you're right. Ah

B: In the end for some groups who have been here for generations it's just symbolic of

T: Yeah.

B: You know, "I'm Polish so here's the Kilbasa." You drag it out on special occasions. And in some cases it's the one remnant of, of the old culture and I'm wondering if that

T: And I've seen that in, in very sophisticated people that I have know. You know, ah, the kilbasa come out. The, the egg bread at Easter time.

B: Pork Pie and Pea Soup and

T: That's right. And I'll tell you, I, because when I say that my parents came from somewhere else they're French Canadian, and I kept, well, I was considerably older but, I would ask my mother, you know, O.K., how did your mother make the Pea Soup? And I'd ask my father how his mother made the Pea Soup you know, and they were slightly different. And I kept experimenting. Till I had what I thought I liked best as Pea Soup. And what came close to what my mother made. Ah, wrote it down, and I'm very consistent about this, I don't know why it is but I insist on measuring everything. And ah, so that it tastes the same. Unless the recipe isn't right and then it's modified until it is right. Ah, I guess I should say food is my hobby. [laugh] Ah, but ah, I had some Pea Soup at the Folk Festival. As far as I'm concerned it was nothing like the kind I make. You know, it was totally different. And I liked mine better. Ah, Meat Pies, we have Meat Pies on New Years Day. It is traditional. I don't care when you make it. That's when, I have a big freezer. I can make them ahead. Freeze them, but we always have Meat pies on, on ah, New Years Day. And that's another thing. Some people put a little potato in it. Some don't. Um, my mother because she had Gall-bladder problem ah, said, you know, "we don't use all pork hamburger. We'll use two pounds of beef and one of pork because we have to have the pork flavor. But I can't have all that pork." And so, and then, I think it may be because my mother liked the flavoring of the meat pies. But it was too much trouble to make it often. So she invented this dish which we called Canadian Chili. [laugh] Which has no Chili in it at all. But it's just the ground hamburger seasoned with cinnamon and clove, cooked up well, and you throw a can of Baked Beans in it. Stir it all up and we love it. Tastes very different from other things but

B: Do you think there are [unclear] in the Cambodian Community in terms of special foods, and foods that may become emblematic maybe down the road?

T: Well, I think that the

B: Are there are a lot of regional variation too?

T: Well, I've had the little Egg Rolls. You know, the Spring Rolls they're called by some people. Um, from different sources, different cooks. And there are differences, you know, ah, I've had Fried Rice that tasted very different. The way one person cooked it and another person cooked it. And I think that's to be expected. You know, recipes evolve in families as well as a norm.

B: Very special ceremonies [unclear]

T: Well, I don't know exactly what you mean by ceremonies. You know, if you're talking about weddings. If you're talking about a religious festival at the Temple

B: Something they serve on their New Year or

T: Well

B: You know, when someone wants to do a special dinner not a run of the mill ordinary everyday dinner. Would that be different?

T: Well, I think, not because I've been invited to anyone's house for a special dinner. You know, I've eaten just, whenever it's there you know. Ah, um, but when for instance people are getting married. a lot of people um, well some of them rent the Smith Baker Center, and have brought in either, families have chipped in and cooked or someone local is hired to do that, or there is a caterer from Boston. I think a Chinese family that have come out and done these weddings. And the latest thing is going to a Chinese Restaurant and having the you know, so many courses served there. And ah, again it's people who, who have a higher stature make a big point of showing that. By making sure that there are nine courses instead of seven like at so and so's wedding. You know, I mean it's like everybody else. [laugh] Ah, and always you have Fried Rice because Plain Rice is everyday. And that's the one thing I know. So I would imagine on a, a, when people are having their, their relatives ah, coming to visit them for the New Year celebration ah, they probably would have Fried Rice instead of Plain Rice at their meals. So, what special dishes I really, I really don't know. It might be, you know, similar to our Christmas Dinners, if in some families you only have a Turkey. In other families it's always Ham. In other families it might be a Goose and or,

B: Or in Virginia Oyster Stew.

T: Yeah, that's right, that's right. And ah, so in some families it might be traditional to have a particular dish that's time consuming to make but special. That might not appear somewhere else. I can't tell you that.

B: One thing I think would be interesting for this project to document would be just a typical meal. From the preparation all the way through serving the meal.

T: Yeah. Well, when you were at the Temple was Mrs. Chun there?

B: Ah.

T: Or has her name come up?

B: I might know her by sight.

T: She's kind of a, I hate to say heavy set. For a Cambodian she is. All right, ah, because so many are just so thin and small. And she's an excellent cook. And I don't know if it's spelled C-H-U-N or C-H-H or if it's an O-E-U-N. Her husband died

B: Last summer, O.K.

T: Last summer right.

B: Yeah, I saw, I've met her. She showed me snap-shots of the funeral.

T: O.K.

B: I don't know. She must be related to ah, [unclear] Phen perhaps. Because I know she's been over at the house on East Franklin which would be [unclear] or two.

T: O.K., O.K., and she helps ah, at the Temple quite a bit. And ah, she's the lady who ah, in previous ah, New Year's Celebrations, any activities we've, we've had has done cooking for the M.A.A. You know, ah, ah, for the festival, there was no way. We had to get a different cook. And ah, ah, that person, you know, the flavor was different than we, it's traditional that when we are doing one of these festivals whether it's New Years where it's mostly for the Cambodian people. Or um, the Folk Art Festival and it's for the American People. Traditionally the foods that we have are the egg Rolls, Fried Rice and the Beef on the Stick. And the cook we had for July ah, uses a lot more ginger in her Beef on a Stick than Mrs. Chun. O.K., different flavor, I can't say that I like one more than the other. They were both great. Because I happen to like garlic. And Mrs. Chun's the garlic really gets you, [laugh] you know. So

B: Ginger too.

T: Yeah, yeah. So it was different. Equally good, ah, ah, her Fried ice was, I kept, as I doled it out, you know, I kept trying to see. What's in there? you know. That makes it so good. But some kind of little sausage that got chopped into small pieces. As well as little pieces of chicken and shrimp. Ah, excellent flavor. Ah, so I think, you know, if you talk to Chun she'd ah, and we're good friends. She's a special lady.

B: She seems very nice.

T: Yeah, she is. So

D: Could you let me in by asking ah

B: Aside from [unclear laughter] aside from anything I've missed. Which is quite a bit probably.

D: Ah, what about the outside community? I mean their perceptions and their, are their problems?

T: Well, I

D: With [unclear] person did they find jobs and you know?

T: Well, as far as job are concerned. Ah, we have, you know, employers who are happy and sad. All right. They are happy when, because of the productivity level of the Cambodian workers. They are sad because, frequently they don't call up if they are not coming. Or they quit the job without notice. You know, one of our major employers ah, I think has something like three hundred and fifty Cambodians working there. Ah, and most of them are on second shift. [phone rings in background] Huge number and

B: Are those assembly of some kind?

T: Machine operating.

B: Oh.

T: Basically. I mean do you give brand names? [laugh]

B: Sure.

T: It's B.A.S.F. That makes all the audio-tapes and stuff. And video-tapes and, ah

B: Easy [unclear]

T: [laugh] Another company ah, down the road from them ah, works in optics and doesn't have ant Cambodians and decided that they might like to look into this.

B: Ah ha.

T: And what we found are, course we've, you know, the, the market right now, there are more jobs than there are people to fill them. So companies have had to get competitive and pay a higher wage. If they want to attract the workers. Ah, so this company that dealt with Optics. We basically said, "what's your pay scale for entry level you know." And especially if we're talking limited English. And they told us what their standard entry level pay scale was. And I said, "unless you up the anti. You're not going to get anybody, because your neighbor down the street is paying a dollar an hour more. You know, no one is going to go for \$4.50 if they can get \$5.50. Well, yes but we, we'd be training in the, and there'd be special skills and you can go up to, you know, \$9.00 an hour. It's today that the rent is due. Right? You've got to get it now. Ah, so we never did finalize anything with that company. But they raised the question on you know, we hear that they're good workers. Are they? And we said, " call B.A.S.F. Production went up 35%. Don't take our word for it. Call them up."

B: Yeah.

T: So ah, so that's the, that's why we get, we'll get

D: Something like that might cause problems with the non-Asians workers?

T: Well, I haven't

D: It's like in a sense showing them up.

T: Yes, so I think eventually they get the whole shift with nothing but Southeast Asians. [laugh]

D: Can I just see, don't mind me, [unclear] my tape.



T: Yeah, we have had, we have had employers, I've had them say to me, "now I can't say this publicly. But we would like to get rid of these other workers. We would rather have Southeast Asians." You know, and I say, "you're right. You can't say that publicly."

D: [laugh] Right.

T: You know. Ah, so we have, we have that kind of thing. We also have going back several years, when the community wasn't as large. Ah, ah people quit a job um, for reasons that, I don't know why they would do that you know. Why don't you just ask somebody? Don't just quit. Ah, one odd reason was, they don't have a Coke machine. The other odd reason was, there was a Spanish person that said, "hey, babe!" That was an insult. I said, "you know, did you talk back? Did you say, please, that's not according to my custom. No, just walked off the job. It's not the bosses fault, you know. [laugh] And I'm sure that, well I'm not sure but, someone was just trying to be friendly. Ah, but now, ah, one of the things, you know, we tend to see more ah, representative of the community and agencies who want to learn about the culture. Who want to have an exchange. Who want to help in the process of assimilation. Then we would see the people who are negative.

D: Right.

T: Because they're not going to bother coming here. That's going to happen out in the field. Ah, so, so

D: You would know about it. It would be for people who come here and talk about it, or mention it.

T: That's right.

D: If there's a problem

T: That's right, um. We know that ah, and it's been ah, expressed publicly. That the response by the police department to a call for you know, a complaint, children are throwing rocks at the house. Ah, other emergencies ah, they just feel that they are not getting the same kind of response. You know. And I've talked to people and said well, if the police department is, is under staffed and if someone who is, you know, a wealthy American calling from a certain address, if it takes twenty minutes before they get a response then there's nothing much you can do but to vote for a bigger police force. But, if that person gets a response in a few minutes, and you have to go back the next day and still say, "I didn't hear from anyone." Then that's not proper. But there have been statements made that the police do not respond. Ah, City Hall since ah, that ah, was done publicly. The Governor has an advisory committee hold hearings um, here. Ah, the police department has tried to, the city has tried to help the police department to ah, be more responsive. Hire someone who will be available with bi, you know, bi-lingual capacity for the police department. For emergency services. Ah, so City Hall has been trying to do things. Um, the official response ah, from ah, the Mayor, the previous Mayor, the City Manager it has been very positive. It's been an out reach to this community. Ah, I think Lowell is probably ah,

different from many cities. Because it was built as a city of, well it was built for mill girls, but, then it became a city of immigrants. And they've all had their problems, they've all had ah, their growing pains. And but they've all evolved and they know now for the next group.

D: And Lowell officially hospitable.

T: Yeah.

D: To the [unclear].

T: Yeah, now I know that was some, um, ramification in the Hispanic Community when a Cambodian was named to the Zoning Board of Appeals. How come one of us hasn't been named? They're newer. It should be our turn, O.K. Ah, that caused a little bit of at least in the news papers. I didn't think it increased any friction in the neighborhood. Ah, on the other hand with the school situation and the Hispanic Children being out placed last year. And the Cambodian Children being out of the normal school ah, buildings. Ah, have been working together. For equal education for all our children. So ah, you know, and I keep saying, "well as long as your children know that you're working together. How can your children not get along." So ah, there are feelings ah, of apprehension about ah, Hispanics by the Cambodian youth?

B: Yeah. [unclear] by Cambodians?

T: Yeah. Ah

B: Do you feel almost a sense of almost jealousy?

T: Well, the jealousy comes up with, how come the Cambodian got named to the City Board?

D: [unclear] I think it's more everyday than that.

T: Well, there are

D: Work two jobs you have more.

T: True.

D: You have more, you have money. And you might have a nicer car.

T: That's right.

D: It's a visible symbol of

T: That's right.

D: Success.

T: And when there's a lot of fuss made over the Cambodian student has learned so fast, O.K. And what their saying is, "this child has an excuse because he's been here three years. And his parents have been here three years. You have been here, you were born here, and you still don't speak English." And what I say to my comm, ah, my leaders is, "you can show them the way. And they have to be prepared for the next wave. Whether those are Ethiopians or Afghanises they have to show the way. Yeah." [phone rings in background] They think I'm a little odd, but that's all right. You have to be a little odd to work here. [laugh] That's my stock answer. I don't know what else, what other specific areas

B: [unclear]

T: O.K.

B: Let me get back

T: O.K. Let me make a note

B: You taught me to ah, what was her name?

T: The high school, ah, the

B: She's going to the Community College.

T: The Community College. Her name is Sithran Chan.

B: You'll have to spell it.

T: Yeah, S-I-T-H-R-A-N one word, and than C-H-A-N.

B: And Chan would be her last name.

T: Right. And we call her, Ran. Ah, every child in that families first name starts with S-I-T-H. And then has a different ending. Except for the baby. The one who is like second or third grade now. So I said to Ran one day, "how come all, you know, your brother is, you know, Sith Swoon, you're Sith Ran. We have Sith Not, we have Sith Sook, you know, how come everybody's got this? And she said, "because it had something to do with my fathers name and my fathers family." Then I said, "well, why didn't the youngest child?" And she wasn't born in the U.S., you know, she was born in the camps. Well, I said, "how come she doesn't have it?" She said, "my mother got tired of it." [laugh]

B: Well, one day I'm talking to a man whose name is Sergeant.

T: Sergeant.

B: And

T: Cambodian?

B: Yeah, and I was asking [unclear] one time about it. Well, it's just like in the army. [unclear] said O.K.

T: [Laughter] Well, one

B: Might have been born when American troops were there or something. And somehow got the name.

T: Yeah, it could have been

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